



Australian Bureau of Statistics

1249.0 - Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG), 2016

Previous ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 18/07/2016

Summary

Overview

OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE CLASSIFICATION

The Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) is the Australian statistical standard for classifying statistics by cultural and ethnic groups. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) endorses the use of this classification when collecting, aggregating and disseminating data relating to the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Australian population. In addition to its use by the ABS, the ASCCEG is also designed for use in the broader Australian statistical community, including government agencies, private companies and community organisations. Use of ASCCEG by statistical, administrative and service delivery agencies improves the comparability and compatibility of data about ethnicity collected from different sources.

The ABS published the first edition of ASCCEG in October 2000. A second edition was published in 2005 and revisions to the second edition were published in 2011 and 2016.

The identification of cultural and ethnic groups in the classification, and the way in which they are grouped, does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the ABS regarding the recognition of any group by governments, organisations or individuals, or the status accorded them. Nor does it imply the expression of any opinion concerning the relative merit or importance of particular cultural and ethnic groups or the peoples who belong to them.

DEFINITION OF ETHNICITY

ASCCEG is designed to be used for the classification of information relating to topics such as ancestry, ethnic identity, and cultural diversity. Although these topics have elements of difference, it is considered that the concept common to them all, and underpinning the classification, is ethnicity.

The words 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic' are associated with many different meanings. The *Macquarie Dictionary* (on line Edition 2016) provides the following Australian context:

1. relating to or peculiar to a human population or group, especially one with a common ancestry, language, etc
2. relating to the origin, classification, characteristics, etc, of such groups
3. of or relating to members of the Australian community who are migrants or the descendants of migrants and whose first language is not English

4. recognisable as coming from an identifiable culture.

For the purposes of ASCCEG, 'ethnicity' refers to the shared identity or similarity of a group of people on the basis of one or more factors. These factors were enunciated by the 1986 Population Census Ethnicity Committee (ABS Cat. No. 2172.0), chaired by the late Professor W.D. Borrie CBE, in *The Measurement of Ethnicity in the Australian Census of Population and Housing* report to the Australian Statistician (the Borrie Report). "The Committee considered that the most enlightening attempt to define an ethnic group is that contained in a United Kingdom Law Lords statement" (reported in *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol 17, No. 2, 1983). The Law Lords noted the key factor as being the group regarding itself and is regarded by others, as a distinct community by virtue of certain characteristics, not all of which have to be present in the case of each ethnic group.

Several distinguishing characteristics were cited, including:

- a long shared history, the memory of which is kept alive
- a cultural tradition, including family and social customs, sometimes religiously based
- a common geographic origin
- a common language (but not necessarily limited to that group)
- a common literature (written or oral)
- a common religion
- being a minority (often with a sense of being oppressed)
- being racially conspicuous.

Since publication of the Borrie Report in 1984, the multicultural nature of Australian society has further developed; however, the approach to the definition of ethnicity in the Borrie Report is still relevant and serves the purposes of ASCCEG.

The approach of defining ethnic or cultural groups in terms of one or more relevant characteristics allows the notion of ethnicity to be viewed in broad sub-concepts. The Borrie Report describes these as a self perceived group identification approach, and an approach that is more historically determined. In ASCCEG, ethnicity is based on the self perceived group identification approach for a number of reasons:

- Self perceived group identification measures the extent to which individuals associate with particular cultural or ethnic groups. A measure of active association produces data which is more useful in terms of policy and service delivery needs. An historically determined approach would produce data which relates individuals to groups with which they no longer have a particular affinity and with which they may have little social, cultural or economic similarity.
- The method used to collect information on ethnicity or ancestry in the ABS and other organisations is self-perception based on a self assessed response to a direct question. No attempt is made to historically determine the origins of individuals. It is important for the concept underpinning the classification and the categories of the classification to be in harmony with this approach.
- The use of self-perception results in the need to include a number of categories in the classification that equate to national cultural identities e.g. Australian.

Considering ethnicity as a multi dimensional concept based on a number of distinguishing characteristics using a self-perception approach allows for a practical and useful classification attuned to generally accepted notions of what constitutes ethnicity and cultural identity. This approach supports the collection and use of data in statistical, administrative and service delivery settings.

SCOPE OF THE CLASSIFICATION

The scope of ASCCEG is all cultural and ethnic groups in the world as defined above. In practice, only those cultural and ethnic groups with significant numbers of persons resident in Australia are separately identified in the classification. Those groups not separately identified are included in the most appropriate residual (not elsewhere classified) category of the classification. Residual categories are explained in 'About Codes'.

The code structure of the classification allows for the addition of cultural and ethnic groups as needed.

The classification is not intended to classify people, but rather to classify all claims of association with a cultural or ethnic group.

Building the Classification

BUILDING THE CLASSIFICATION

CLASSIFICATION STRUCTURE

The Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) has a three level hierarchical structure that consists of broad groups, narrow groups, and cultural and ethnic groups.

Broad group

The broad group level is the highest level of the classification. Each of the nine broad groups of the classification contain between two and five geographically proximate narrow groups.

Narrow group

The narrow group level is the middle level of the classification. Each of the 28 narrow groups of the classification contain between one to 33 cultural and ethnic groups.

Cultural and ethnic group

The cultural and ethnic group level is the base level of the classification. There are 277 cultural and ethnic group categories including 24 residual ('not elsewhere classified') categories. Residual categories are explained in 'About Codes'.

Hierarchical level	Example	
Broad group	7	Southern and Central Asian
Narrow group	71	Southern Asian
Cultural and ethnic group	7101	Anglo-Indian

CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

The classification criteria are the principles by which the base level categories of the classification are formed and then aggregated to form broader or higher-level categories in the classification's structure. Ordinarily, one of the principles of classification design is that the categories should be mutually exclusive. That is, the categories should be distinct from one another and should not overlap. Adhering to this principal in relation to cultural and ethnic groups can be problematic as the criteria for identification with a particular group are varied.

Two classification criteria are used in ASCCEG to form the three hierarchical levels:

- Geographic proximity of cultural and ethnic groups in terms of the location in which they originated or developed. This refers to the geographic area of the world in which a cultural or ethnic group first became, or was first recognised as, a distinct entity.
- Similar social and cultural characteristics. These include the characteristics described in the 'Overview, Definition of Ethnicity'. The primary elements of similarity used to form and aggregate cultural and ethnic groups are languages spoken and religion practised. Other characteristics considered are family and social customs, historical links, and national identities. Characteristics such as food, music and art traditions also serve as indicators of cultural and social similarity.

The classification criteria have been applied to produce a classification structure that can be described in conventional terms:

- cultural and ethnic groups are aggregated to form narrow groups on the basis of geographic proximity and similarity in terms of cultural and social characteristics
- narrow groups are aggregated to form broad groups on the basis of geographic proximity and a degree of similarity in terms of their cultural and social characteristics.

Some classificatory decisions are noteworthy:

The cultural identities of the peoples of Australia are recognised within ASCCEG. It would be inconsistent and impractical in a classification designed to collect data within the Australian context to not have 'Australian Peoples' and 'Australian' included in the classification. Australia has been inhabited by the Indigenous people for over 40,000 years and it is fitting that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples be recognised with appropriate categories in the narrow group 'Australian Peoples' and since European settlement, over 200 years ago, a distinct Australian cultural identity has emerged prompting the inclusion of 'Australian' in that narrow group.

Cultural and ethnic group 3308 'Russian' has been classified in Broad Group 3 'Southern and Eastern European' on the grounds of cultural similarity with other European cultural and ethnic groups even though much of Russia lies geographically in Asia. As a general rule, cultural and ethnic groups which originated and are located in Russia have also been classified to Europe. It is acknowledged, however, that this is not necessarily the best solution for all cultural and ethnic groups east of the Urals, many of whom are more culturally Asian than European. The principle that has been adopted for the classification of groups in Russia east of the Urals, is that those which speak Altaic or Iranic languages are classified to Narrow Group 72 Central Asian, while those which speak Ugro-Finnic languages are classified to Narrow Group 33 Eastern European.

Jewish has been included in Broad Group 4 'North African and Middle Eastern'. It is

acknowledged that many Jewish people in Australia might not have ties with the Middle East and might consider classification within one of the European broad groups as more correct. However, following consultation with representatives of the Jewish community at the time ASCCEG was developed, it was decided to adhere to the classification criterion for geographic proximity and include 'Jewish' in 'North African and Middle Eastern' as this is where the Jewish culture originated.

Many people relate to more than one cultural or ethnic group and will give a multiple response to a question on ancestry, ethnicity or cultural identity. If meaningful and useful data is to be collected, the classification must be used to capture each element of a multiple response. Often a response will indicate an identification with a country in a national or cultural sense and will also acknowledge continuing ties with other ethnic or cultural groups e.g. Irish Australian, Italian Australian. Data collection models should be developed to capture multiple responses.

DESIGN CONSTRAINTS

ASCCEG is primarily a classification for collecting statistical data within the Australian context.

Theoretical and conceptual considerations for developing ASCCEG were constrained by the need to ensure:

- the practical usefulness of the classification for collecting ancestry data from both statistical and administrative sources in Australia
- the analytical usefulness of data collected within the framework of the classification
- the number of Australians identifying with cultural and ethnic groups within each category at each level of the classification
- the identification of groups which could be significant for policy setting and service delivery purposes.

The effect of these constraints on the classification has been that:

- some cultural and ethnic groups which are significant in a world context are not separately identified in the structure
- some broad groups are limited in the number of narrow groups they subsume
- cultural and ethnic groups which are not separately identified are included in the most appropriate residual or not elsewhere classified (nec) category.

The coverage, balance and robustness of the classification structure is such that it can accommodate changes to Australia's cultural and ethnic composition, and can be used to facilitate comparisons with cultural and ethnic data from other countries.

About Codes

ABOUT CODES

STANDARD CODE SCHEME

The classification levels and classification codes are related as follows:

- broad groups are represented by one-digit codes
- narrow groups are represented by two-digit codes
- cultural and ethnic groups are represented by four-digit codes.

The relationship between codes and classification levels are illustrated in the following example of the categories in the 'Oceanian' broad group:

1	OCEANIAN
11	Australian Peoples
1101	Australian
1102	Australian Aboriginal
1103	Australian South Sea Islander
1104	Torres Strait Islander
12	New Zealand Peoples
1201	Maori
1202	New Zealander
13	Melanesian and Papuan
1301	New Caledonian
1302	Ni-Vanuatu
1303	Papua New Guinean
1304	Solomon Islander
1399	Melanesian and Papuan, nec
14	Micronesian
1401	I-Kiribati
1402	Nauruan
1499	Micronesian, nec
15	Polynesian
1501	Cook Islander
1502	Fijian
1503	Niuean
1504	Samoan
1505	Tongan
1506	Hawaiian
1507	Tahitian
1508	Tokelauan
1511	Tuvaluan
1512	Pitcairn
1599	Polynesian, nec

Narrow group categories have two-digit codes where the first digit represents the parent broad group code and the second digit represents the sequence of narrow groups within the parent broad group (e.g. '1 Oceanian' contains '11 Australian Peoples', '12 New Zealand Peoples', '13 Melanesian and Papuan', '14 Micronesian' and '15 Polynesian').

Cultural and ethnic groups have four-digit codes where the first two digits represent the parent narrow group code and the final two digits represent the sequence of cultural and ethnic groups within a narrow group (e.g. '11 Australian Peoples' contains '1101 Australian', '1102 Australian Aboriginal', '1103 Australian South Sea Islander' and '1104 Torres Strait Islander'). Cultural and ethnic groups are in alphabetical order within each narrow group with the exception of residual 'not elsewhere classified' (nec) categories or where new groups have been added following reviews of the classification.

Cultural and ethnic groups do not have codes ending with '0' or '9' because these codes have specific functions within the code scheme, as explained below.

RESIDUAL 'NEC' CATEGORIES

Residual or 'not elsewhere classified' (nec) categories are designed to capture cultural and ethnic groups that are not separately identified in the main structure of the classification due to their low statistical significance. These categories are represented by four digit codes where the first two digits identify the narrow group and the final two digits are '99'. All cultural and ethnic groups which are not separately identified in the classification are included in the 'nec' category of the narrow group to which they relate. The classification currently has 24 'nec' categories at the cultural and ethnic group level for narrow groups where they are required.

'NEC' codes are part of the main structure of the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG).

RESIDUAL 'OTHER' NARROW GROUPS

In some broad groups, codes are reserved for residual categories at the narrow group level. These codes consist of the broad group code followed by '9'. The title of these categories commence with 'Other' and they consist of separately identified cultural and ethnic groups which do not fit into substantive narrow groups on the basis of the classification criteria. The two residual categories of this kind currently in the classification are '49 Other North African and Middle Eastern' and '69 Other North-East Asian'.

SUPPLEMENTARY CODES

Supplementary or 'not further defined' (nfd) codes are used to code responses that are insufficiently specific for the main classification structure to be used. They exist for operational reasons only, and no data would be coded to them if sufficiently detailed responses were obtained in all instances.

There are three types of supplementary codes:

- four digit codes ending with two or three zeros
- four digit codes commencing with three zeros
- four digit codes commencing with the digits '09' to meet specific needs.

Supplementary 'nfd' codes ending with zeros

Codes ending in zero are described as 'not further defined' (nfd) codes and are used to code responses which cannot be accurately coded to substantive (four digit) cultural and ethnic groups but which can be coded to a higher level (broad or narrow group) of the classification structure. For example, the response 'Scandinavian' does not contain sufficient information to be coded directly to a substantive cultural and ethnic group, but it can be coded to narrow group '24 Northern European' which covers all the cultural and ethnic groups that are encompassed by the term 'Scandinavian'. It is allocated the 'nfd' code '2400 Northern European, nfd'.

Similarly, responses which do not contain sufficient information to be coded to a specific cultural or ethnic group, or to a narrow group, but which are known to fall within the range of cultural and ethnic groups of a particular broad group, can be coded at the broad group level. For example, the response 'Celtic' does not contain sufficient information to be coded

directly to a cultural or ethnic group or narrow group, but it can be coded to broad group '2 North-West European' as all Celtic cultural and ethnic groups originated and developed in North-West Europe. It is allocated the 'nfd' code '2000 North-West European, nfd'.

Supplementary codes commencing with zeros

Four-digit codes commencing with '000' enable coding of responses that cannot be coded to any category in the ASCCEG. There are two supplementary codes of this kind: '0000 Inadequately described' and '0001 Not stated'.

Supplementary codes commencing with '09'

Four digit codes commencing with '09' are used to code ancestry responses which broadly describe the region of origin but cannot be coded to either a substantive cultural or ethnic group or to one of the 'nfd' codes. These codes allow the collection and storage of data for responses such as African, Asian, and European.

Using supplementary codes enables responses or input data which can only be assigned codes at the broad or narrow group levels of the classification to be processed within a collection at the four digit level. This allows the coding process to be as precise as the input data quality allows, preserving data that would otherwise be discarded as uncodable or aggregated with other data to which it is unrelated in the 'inadequately described' supplementary category.

Supplementary codes are not part of the classification structure. They are listed separately in Table 2 of the ASCCEG data cube (accessible from the 'Downloads' tab).

Index for Coding Responses

This document was added or updated on 28/03/2017.

INDEX FOR CODING RESPONSES

CODING NON-STANDARD RESPONSES

Responses provided in statistical and administrative collections do not always reflect formal names of categories in the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG). For example, Sicilian may be a response to a question about ancestry in a survey but it does not exactly match the title of the category "3103 Italian". A coding index is therefore necessary to act as a link between responses and the classification.

The accurate coding of ancestry responses within Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collections is carried out by automated coding systems that link high-frequency responses to their corresponding categories in the ASCCEG via a coding index. These automatic coding systems are based upon the information contained in the ASCCEG coding index.

ASCCEG CODING INDEX

The ASCCEG coding index connects more than one thousand high-frequency ancestry

responses to each of their corresponding cultural and ethnic groups within the ASCCEG, enabling responses to be assigned accurately and quickly to the appropriate category of the classification. The index includes formal ancestry titles, contemporary and traditional titles, spelling variations and misspellings. The contents of the index are drawn from high-frequency responses identified in statistical surveys and in the Census of Population and Housing. Classification codes for particular responses have been allocated by reference to literature in the field and consultation with academics, government and private organisations with relevant knowledge and expertise; and by analysis of ABS data. In addition to its coding function, the index can be used to clarify the nature, extent and varietal content of each classification category.

The ASCCEG coding index may be requested by contacting standards@abs.gov.au.

CODING RULES

The following coding rules outline the parameters used to build the entries in the coding index:

- responses which match exactly with an entry in the coding index are assigned the code allocated to that index entry
- responses which have a partial match with an entry in the coding index and only differ in terms of spelling, use of abbreviations or acronyms, are assigned the code allocated to that index entry
- responses which have a partial match with an entry in the coding index and only differ in terms of qualifying or extraneous words are assigned the code allocated to that index entry
- responses which do not match with an index entry or do not relate to a separately identified cultural and ethnic group in the classification are assigned a residual (nec) category code, or a supplementary (nfd) code
- responses which are not precise enough to be coded to any category should be assigned the 'inadequately described' supplementary code
- when coding what appear to be multiple responses, if all the words appearing in the response are contained in a single index entry, assign the code listed
- when coding what appear to be multiple responses, if all the words appearing in a response are not contained in a single index entry, assign a code for each word representing a cultural or ethnic group that does appear in the index.

The coding rules outlined above can also be used as a guide for coding responses that are not covered by the coding index.

Using the Classification

USING THE CLASSIFICATION

EDITING SPECIFICATIONS

The full range of Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) codes should be used in all stages of statistical production including validating input codes at the editing stage of data processing, aggregating data to higher levels of the classification's structure, and deriving output items.

The valid range of codes consists of:

- all codes in the main structure of the classification
- all codes in the 'Supplementary codes' list.

The valid range of codes are shown in Tables 1 and 2 of the ASCCEG data cube (accessible from the 'Downloads' tab).

CODING, STORAGE AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

Regardless of the level of aggregation envisaged for the dissemination of data, wherever possible, data should be coded and stored at the most detailed (four digit) level of the classification. Collecting and storing data at the four-digit level of the classification allows the greatest flexibility for the output of statistical data, enables more detailed and complex analyses, and facilitates comparisons with other data sets.

The hierarchical structure of ASCCEG allows users the flexibility to present statistics at the level of the classification which best suits their particular purposes. Data can be output at broad group, narrow group or cultural and ethnic group levels of the classification. If necessary, significant cultural and ethnic groups within a narrow group can be presented separately while the remaining cultural and ethnic groups within the narrow group are aggregated. The same principle can be adopted to highlight significant narrow groups within a broad group. Aggregated categories should be labelled 'Other' or 'Other (narrow group name)', for example.

Cultural and ethnic groups from different narrow groups should not be added together to form an aggregation that is not included in the classification structure as this corrupts the application of the classification criteria and has negative repercussions for data comparability. Similarly, narrow groups from different broad groups should not be added together.

Classification Review

This document was added or updated on 28/03/2017.

CLASSIFICATION REVIEW

SCOPE OF REVIEW

In 2016 the ABS conducted a minor review of the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG). The review was conducted to ensure the classification was up-to-date, correct any errors in the classification, and to improve the

index used to code responses. The conceptual model underpinning the classification and revisions impacting data time series for broad and narrow groups in the ASCCEG were out of scope of this review.

METHOD OF REVIEW

The review of ASCCEG was carried out by:

- statistical analysis of 2011 Australian Census of Population and Housing data to identify changes to the cultural and ethnic profile of the Australian population
- stakeholder consultation with a range of users and organisations including ethnic and community groups, academics, and other non-government and government stakeholders
- research to confirm appropriate terminology to be used for categories in the classification, observations noted from statistical analysis and stakeholder comments, and to assess the accuracy of code assignments.

OUTCOME OF REVIEW

The outcome of the 2016 review was that two new cultural and ethnic groups were added to the classification and seven cultural and ethnic groups were renamed. Consequent updates were made to correspondence tables and the coding index to ensure that revised cultural and ethnic group titles were reflected in those products. Several unrelated updates were made to the coding index to enhance its content.

Cultural and ethnic groups added to the classification

The following cultural and ethnic groups were added:

- Pitcairn (code 1512), added to capture ancestries likely to be reported by Norfolk Island residents, as Norfolk Island was included in the Australian Census of Population and Housing for the first time in 2016
- Yezidi (code 4914), added to reflect this change in Australia's cultural and ethnic profile.

Cultural and ethnic groups renamed

The titles of seven cultural and ethnic groups were renamed to minimise the use of non alpha-numeric characters that do not add to the meaning or interpretation of the title; better reflect the terminology used by Australians to identify the group; and correct spelling. The renamed titles are:

Code	ASCCEG 2011, Second Edition (Revision 1)	ASCCEG 2016
3212	Roma/Gypsy	Roma Gypsy
4302	Darfu/Darfurian	Darfur
8	PEOPLE OF THE AMERICAS	PEOPLES OF THE AMERICAS
8105	Hispanic (North American)	Hispanic North American
8403	Trinidadian (Tobagonian)	Trinidadian Tobagonian
9118	Senegales	Senegalese

Changes to the coding index

The following coding index changes were made:

- alternative names were added for South Sea Islander (code 1103) and various ancestries from the Torres Strait (code 1104)
- index entries were added for Niuean Maori (code 1503), Samoan Maori (code 1504) and Tongan Maori (code 1505) to reflect the geographic and historical origins of these groups
- Macanese (code 6101) was added as the preferred term for peoples with Portuguese / Chinese ancestry from the island of Macau
- Tutsi (code 9299) was added to recognise this group
- changes were made to the index to reflect all the changes to the classification detailed above.

COMPARING CURRENT AND PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF ASCCEG

Correspondences for the ASCCEG enable two-way comparison between the ASCCEG 2016 and ASCCEG 2011 Second Edition Revision 1. The correspondence tables itemise the code linkages between cultural and ethnic groups, detail links between broad groups and narrow groups, and indicate the changes to the ASCCEG between the current and most recent previous version (2011, Second Edition Revision 1). These correspondence tables are available in the ASCCEG data cube, accessible from the 'Downloads' tab.

Generally, the categories in both editions of the ASCCEG relate directly to the same entity in each edition. However, in some instances, there is not a direct relationship between the cultural and ethnic group categories in the two editions of the ASCCEG. Partial linkages are indicated by the word 'part' after the code of the cultural and ethnic group concerned.

About this Release

The Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) was developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for use in the collection, storage and dissemination of all Australian statistical and administrative data relating to ancestry in Australia. This release (ASCCEG 2016) contains the updated classification based on a minor review.

History of Changes

This document was added or updated on 28/03/2017.

28/03/2017 – a coding index was removed from the data cube and references to the coding index have been updated on the Index for Coding Responses page to state that the coding

index is available on request.

Explanatory Notes

Abbreviations

ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASCCEG	Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups
nec	not elsewhere classified
nfd	not further defined

Data Cubes (I-Note) - Data Cubes

A coding index has been removed from the data cube. A coding index may be of use to anyone seeking to code responses to the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups and may be requested by contacting standards@abs.gov.au.

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